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# APR 28 1961 Conscience: A Guide or a Chain?

A letter in "Our Readers' Views" column today takes issue with our editorial of April 18, entitled "Cuba's War—a Test of Our Deftness."

The writer suggests it was rather a test of our deafness to the voice of our national conscience.

It is a point worth discussing.

Most Americans would like to see a world in which all international conflicts can be settled by orderly negotiation or adjudication; and they would like their government to abide by the principles enunciated and implied in the United Nations Charter.

Some Americans believe this is foolish, impractical idealism; that nations survive or fall by force or the threat of force; and that we should be cold-bloodedly realistic enough to use force whenever we feel our interests are endangered.

Both views are represented in the present and former administrations in Washington, in Congress, in the State Department.

The Communists do not play according to the rules we favor. So we must either join them and fight on their own level; or face the prospect of losing many cold war skirmishes because we lean over backward not to "intervene"; or, hopefully,

develop such deft skill in "advising, assisting, guiding, supporting" that we can win cold war clashes without directly violating treaties, international laws, or our own national conscience.

The operation in Cuba obviously was not handled either vigorously or deftly enough to succeed in its purpose. Whether this was mainly the fault of our CIA, our political-diplomatic leaders, or of the leaders and factions of the anti-Castro Cubans, can be argued endlessly.

An American who sees no threat to America, freedom and democracy in the Soviet domination of Cuba, may well complain of hypocrisy, sophistry and casuistry in the declarations and explanations of our government leaders.

An American who does recognize the seriousness of this threat, knows that this government must meet and defeat it, by one means or another; preferably by means which will not trigger a world war, and will not alienate scores of nations that are our natural allies.

Would our national conscience rest easy if, by inaction, we permitted Cuba to become a powerful Soviet military base which could intimidate all of Central and South America into becoming satellites of Communist Russia? We think not.